

THE
S P E E C H
OF THE
RIGHT HON. CHARLES JAMES FOX, K
IN THE
HOUSE OF COMMONS,

On Tuesday, March 24, 1795,

ON A MOTION

*"That the House do resolve itself into a Committee of the whole
House to consider of the State of the Nation."*

TO WHICH IS ADDED

A CORRECT LIST OF THE MINORITY.

L O N D O N :

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PICCADILLY.

1795.

THE Reporters of the following Speech do not presume to say, that they have been able to present it to the public with such accuracy as they could have wished. To give a faithful representation of the glowing eloquence of Mr. Fox, is beyond the effort of memory: all that they can pretend to have accomplished is, preserving beyond the transitory record of a journal, the arrangement, the topics, and so much of the argument as like an imperfect sketch may give some idea of the finished picture.

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HOUSE OF COMMONS.

MARCH 24th, 1795.

MOTION FOR AN INQUIRY INTO THE STATE OF THE NATION.

MR. Fox rose at five o'clock, and addressed himself to the House to the following effect :

MR. SPEAKER, In pursuance of the notice I gave on a former day, I now rise to make a motion, that this House do resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider of the state of the nation. Such a motion has been often made in this House, though, I believe, it has been seldom successful. I admit some grounds ought always on such an occasion to be laid before the House; and unless some matter is brought forward to induce you to take such a step, unless the state and circumstances of the country call on you to enter on this inquiry, I do not expect they will agree to my motion.

If, in the course of what I shall have to state there may be many things in which I shall not have the good fortune to have the concurrence of the whole House, I am confident I shall be able to state one thing, on which there will not be one dissentient voice. In whatever light men may consider the present state of Europe, however much they may differ about the mode of conducting the present war, in whatever way they may view the situation of the public mind in every part of the civilized world—whatever may be their sentiments on these different topics, they will all agree in one conclusion with respect to this country, namely, that this is a time of all others, in which it is most material and most important,—what indeed is always material and important,—that this House should stand high in the opinion of its constituents, and that it should be entitled to their confidence and respect, by shewing that it is really concerned for their dearest and most valuable interests. If I had nothing else to state

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on this business, I should think all those who are impressed with that opinion, and, who seriously observing the critical situation of mankind, are convinced that the practical importance of this House depends on its being respected by its constituents abroad, would, without any additional argument, be disposed to admit, that in order to entitle us to that respect, which we all wish to possess, which it is our duty to maintain, but which we cannot hope to enjoy unless we deserve it, it is incumbent on this House to enter into a detailed and serious examination of the state of the nation. No man will deny, that the dangers that surround the country in the present crisis are many and alarming; and therefore it must follow, that the House of Commons cannot be said to do its duty, to do it faithfully and conscientiously, if, in a time of the greatest and most imminent danger, it gives blind and implicit confidence to any executive government, without grounding that confidence on a thorough, serious, complete, and detailed investigation of the past.

I stated that this motion has been made at different times in the history of this country, to which it is unnecessary to advert. I myself had the honour of making a similar motion in this House in the year 1777 *, a time most undoubtedly of great peril and danger. But whoever looks back to the events of that period, and takes into the account even the most unfortunate of them—the surrender of an army at Saratoga, &c.—calamitous as they were, I say, there is no man that looks back to that period and compares it with this, who will not see that the dangers which then threatened this nation were trifling and insignificant, that the losses then sustained were of no consequence when compared to those we have suffered at this moment; and the contrast will be still greater when we compare the consequences of the dangers and disasters of that period, with the effects of those recent misfortunes which now affect every part of the British empire. In the year 1777, however, I thought it necessary to state the grounds which then occurred to me for going into a consideration of the state of the nation. And although the majority of the House, with whom I had not the good fortune to concur, ultimately negatived the different questions which were brought forward, they thought the crisis to be such, that it was not becoming the dignity or consistent with the character of the House of Commons, at such an awful and momentous period, to decline the proposed inquiry into the state of the nation: for momentous and awful it undoubtedly was, and must always be so considered in itself,

* See Debrett's Parliamentary Register for 1777.

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though it wears an aspect totally different when compared with the moment at which I am now speaking.

Sir, there are many in this House who think that disaffection to the constitution of the country has spread much wider among His Majesty's subjects than I believe it has; many have been more afraid of the progress of new and French principles than I have been, because they have thought them much more considerable in their influence than I have been able to persuade myself they really are. At the same time I will not deceive the House nor myself so far as not to admit, that, if there has been any danger from the progress of French principles and French opinions, the late events have not a little tended to heighten and increase that danger. And not merely all the events abroad but all the measures which have been adopted at home have more particularly contributed to render the prospect imminent and alarming.

I am one of those who think, not only that a majority of the people (for that would ill express my opinion), but that the great and almost unanimous body of the nation, are full of loyalty to His Majesty, and of affection to the constitution of the country: however, I am also of opinion, that there are some now, as there have been at all times, who are actuated by different sentiments and different views. I am very much afraid such men have been encouraged to a certain degree by the progress of the French arms on the Continent, though in a much higher degree by the conduct of Ministers at home. The consequence has certainly been, that these principles and opinions have rather gained than lost credit in this country; and this danger, which is daily and hourly increasing, has arisen not from plots and conspiracies, the existence of which I have never thought well proved, but from a general opinion that the House of Commons are not the representatives of the people of England; by which I do not mean that they are not returned by the people, but that they are not even virtually their representatives; that they do not sincerely feel for the calamities of the people of England; and that they do not take that lively concern in their comfort and happiness which their situation calls on them to take. If such an opinion has gone forth, and if there is too much reason to suspect that it has made a considerable impression on the public mind, what argument can be so strong in support of such an opinion as to afford those who have adopted it an opportunity to say, Can you believe that the constitution of Great Britain is what you have been taught to esteem, and that the House of Commons is what you boast it to be, when at a time of the most critical importance, of the most alarming danger, and when the conduct of the executive government, whether culpable or laudable, has been attended

With the greatest calamities, the House of Commons can sit still without inquiry, without even knowing the state of the country, and without calling to an account (I do not mean for punishment) the executive government, for the most marked failure of measures that ever happened to any executive government at any period of our history? I say, this argument is of great weight. If it should appear, at a moment when the opinion of the country seems to be materially changed; if at a period when many are for negotiation, when many who were formerly convinced of the justice and necessity of the war, though still adhering to their original sentiments, yet have so far altered their views as to think there ought to be an immediate attempt at negotiation, and are willing at present to consider as no obstacles of treaty, many of those circumstances which they formerly thought incompatible with the security, the dignity, and the honour of Great Britain:—if at such a period as this, I say, we should find that the House of Commons still continue the same blind and implicit confidence, and do not appear to be actuated in any degree by the common opinion of the public, but persevere in laying burdens on their constituents, and taking measures which will render indispensably necessary still heavier burdens;—if the House do all this, without even inquiring how far the money they have hitherto voted away has been spent for the advantage, the honour, and security of Great Britain; without regarding how many oceans of blood have been made to flow, and how many millions of money have been expended;—I say, if all this is so, I wish to know what I am to answer to the enemies of the British constitution. I wish the King's Ministers to furnish me with arguments to combat in favour of such a conduct; I wish them to tell me, how I am to contend that the British constitution is the most perfect of all constitutions, and the British House of Commons the best security for the rights and liberties of the subject. The obvious argument in the mouth of the enemies of our constitution is this, How can that be good which produces effects so bad? And how can that government and that constitution be good, which can suffer such failures in its administration to pass without punishment, and not only without punishment, but without inquiry? When this House can sit as indifferent and unconcerned spectators in the midst of a situation admitted on all hands to be the most important and most critical that ever existed in the annals of the country, I ask what I am to say to this House, and to my constituents in vindication of this House, if they continue to testify the same supineness which they hitherto have done? If I have nothing to say, if I have no answer to make, how can we resist the conclusion, that that system cannot be good which in practice is bad, and where the failures are even greater than in those governments

governments that are more arbitrary? The defence of the British constitution which I have always used, has been a practical defence; that the British constitution, though not tallying with the theories of this man, or the notions of that man, has produced substantial happiness to the people. Such I consider to be the true defence of the British constitution: take away that, and I am at a loss on what ground to stand, and how I am to answer those who desire me to look at the practice of the present moment. An executive government, I question not now whether good or bad—an executive government above two years has proceeded on a plan, whether originally just or not, I am not now deciding—has incurred an expence beyond the example of all former times, has occasioned an effusion of human blood beyond all former periods, has recommended a system to be adopted for the attainment of certain objects: that system has been pursued, confidence has been placed in them, and now, at the end of more than two years, we are confessedly farther from every object that was held out to us, than when we first engaged in this war. Every plan has failed, and has turned against us; and this is the system I am to defend on the ground of the practical good it has produced. I ask, what would be the case of a constitution practically bad? Would it not be precisely and exactly the same? Is it not one of the most powerful arguments against the government of any country, that, provided the Prince is satisfied, no failures will be called in question, and the administration may with impunity be conducted upon principles the most hostile to the interests of the people? If that be one of the charges brought against arbitrary governments, which perhaps is not universally true, for the most despotic princes have sometimes been obliged to dismiss their ministers when, in consequence of their gross misconduct, they have roused the indignation of the public; if such a charge be applied to Great Britain, and if it is possible for an administration, whether from misconduct or otherwise, to produce such a series of disgraces, disasters, and calamities as we have experienced since the commencement of the present war; if we are to have persons at the head of affairs under whose management calamity follows calamity; if such an administration can be suffered to exist in this country, except after a solemn and diligent inquiry, which may prove their case to be an exception to the common rule, then one of the most serious accusations against arbitrary governments is applicable to that constitution under which we live; I mean so far as regards the present administration, and not the personal liberty of the subject, which is not now under consideration.

I should think therefore, if I did nothing but state to the
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House, what it is not necessary that the House should hear from me, namely, that we have been upwards of two years engaged in war, that all our plans have failed, that all hope is lost, and that, in point of fact, the enemy against whom we thought we were acting conjointly with all Europe, are stronger in credit and reputation than they were at the beginning of the war, and have at this moment gained more than the wildest imaginations of those who drove us into it ever ascribed either to their ambition or to their principles—more than ever entered even into the minds of the most ambitious of the French monarchs in former days to attempt;—I say, I should think this quite ground enough to induce the House to enter into a consideration of the state of the nation. But I will not confine myself to this general argument. The state of the nation divides itself undoubtedly into many different branches; and I am perfectly sure, if I were to tire your patience and exhaust my own strength, as far as it is possible for me to do, I should still be compelled to omit many circumstances which are closely connected with this subject. I shall endeavour therefore to state some few which I deem to be most material; and if the House duly consider them, I cannot conceive that any man in this House can go out of it, and say, “I have done my duty, I have discharged my trust faithfully and conscientiously to my constituents and my country,” and at the same time reject an inquiry into the present state of the nation. The state of the nation, as I have just said, is most undoubtedly to be considered in various lights. First of all, as to our own resources with respect to men; with respect to money; and with respect to the using of those men and that money for the purposes of the war in which we are now engaged. But these resources of men and money, and the manner in which they are to be used, are not only to be considered by themselves, but we are likewise to consider from whence these resources flow—the state of population, manufactures and commerce, and general prosperity of the country. When we have done this, we must go next into a consideration of our connexions abroad. We must take a survey of our allies, the dependence that may be placed on them; the situation of those allies, and the probability both in respect to their will and their power to act, and to serve the common cause.

Sir, in my opinion, even when these points are considered, there are others of equal importance which remain to be discussed: I mean with respect to the principles on which we have hitherto carried on this war, and on which we are likely to continue to carry it on. It is material, when we are engaged in a war, particularly of this kind, which has been qualified by so many different epithets, and on which the eyes of mankind are so peculiarly

peculiarly fixed; it is material, I say, that in such a war we should invariably maintain the character of moderation, humanity, and justice, without which it is impossible that we should also support the character of vigour and exertion, of wisdom and prudence. These are part, and not the least important, of the resources of a country. They are important in another view, because it is essential to consider whether we have carried on the war with justice and vigour, with wisdom and prudence: and though I hope and believe the contrary will turn out to be the case; yet if it appear that the war was not only just in its origin (which for the sake of argument I shall suppose for a moment), but that we have acted in the prosecution of it vigorously and wisely, then I am afraid the result will be complete despair. If our conduct in the management of the present war has been marked with vigour and wisdom, and we have been more than two years exhausting our resources ineffectually; I wish to know, if neither from a change of measures nor a change of councils I have any reason to look for better success in the future operations of this war (which I hope and trust will not turn out to be true); I wish to know, I say, what other inference I can draw but that of absolute and irremediable despair? If that be the case, the result of an inquiry into the state of the nation will be, that confidence ought to be given to the King's Ministers. For however calamitous the present state of the country may be, if it was brought about without any fault of theirs, undoubtedly confidence ought not to be withdrawn from them: but even in this case an enquiry will be material, because it will lead to a discovery of the true causes of our failures, and of the present distresses of the country, and prove the necessity of abandoning the pursuit of an object which, experience has taught us, cannot be obtained. The inquiry will be even advantageous to Ministers, by shewing that they have acted with justice, wisdom and vigour in the steps which they have taken, though they have been unfortunate in the result. But if it turns out, as I suspect it will, that Ministers have not acted according to any of the principles I have now stated; if they have neither acted with justice and humanity, nor with wisdom and vigour, then it is possible that the object may still be obtained, tho' the means must be varied. But, as I have already said, if Ministers have acted with justice and vigour, then the result must be perfect despair; and it belongs to this House to force Ministers, if they are unwilling, to abandon for ever an object, which a period of upwards of two years has proved to be unattainable. For that object, which experience has shewn cannot be accomplished by ordinary means, must be bad, and ought to be no longer pursued.

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Now, Sir, with respect to the first branch, I have premised, that it is impossible for me to state with accuracy to the House the loss of men in this contest; and if the House goes into a Committee, I should certainly wish to have laid before the House a complete and accurate return of the loss of men since the commencement of the present war.

First, with respect to the loss of the British, as the most important part of the subject, we have had a paper * laid before us this session, which, from what appears on the face of it, cannot possibly be correct. I have compared it with other accounts, on which I admit I have not the highest reliance, those detailed in the *London Gazette*; and I find a considerable difference between the account of the loss of men as stated in the *Gazette*, and that in the paper which now lies on your table. The paper upon your table, by giving a return of the privates only, and by omitting to give any return of the officers, sergeants, drummers, &c. diminishes our loss in appearance, at least one tenth. There are also losses mentioned, although perhaps not specified, in the *Gazette*, of which no return is to be found in this paper. There is one general item to which I wish to advert; an account of a considerable loss about the 9th of May, and of which no notice whatever is taken in the paper upon your table. I have heard there was some loss of British at Nieuport: British standards were taken at Valenciennes and Condé; and therefore there must have been loss of British troops also in that quarter. The loss at Bergem-op-Zoom is not enumerated in this account. I mention these circumstances to shew, that if any gentlemen wish to console themselves with the idea, that there was no loss of men during the last campaign, except what appears from the paper on the table, they deceive themselves most grossly; and there is but too much reason to suppose, Ministers have concerted among themselves to make the loss of British appear less considerable than it really is. I have seen returns, which I believe to be authentic, which make the number of British in the month of September last 26,000 men. Now are there any hopes, when that army shall come home (and the sooner it comes home the better), that the loss out of that number will not be much greater than we have been taught to believe? Are there any hopes that half of that number will return? A list of the wounded, killed and missing will not be sufficient, because undoubtedly in every army there is much mortality not included under what is generally called the loss of men; therefore, instead of calculating the loss from the number of killed, wounded and missing, we must examine the general state of the army. We must compare its numbers at different periods,

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. II. p. 161 of the Appendix.

and include mortality of every kind. We must not only look to the army in Flanders, but we must look to our army wherever it is stationed, whether in Flanders, in the East or West Indies, or on the Continent. We must also attend to the number of recruits that have been enlisted since the commencement of the present war, and, by comparing the number of these and the general state of the army at different times, judge from a view of the whole circumstances what has been the real loss of men. If you follow this method, which I take to be the only just mode of calculation, then I believe you will find that the loss of men sustained in this war has been such as will make every thinking man, who knows any thing of the population of this country, reflect very seriously whether we can afford to substitute new armies for the old.

But we ought to ascertain not only the loss of men in the British army and navy, but also the loss of all troops in British pay. When that article comes to be stated, I believe you will find the loss to be even greater than that of the British. That loss it is evident must likewise be taken into the account. But this is not all. If you consider that this is a war in which we cannot act but through the medium of great continental alliances, it becomes a most material part of this consideration to state also the loss of our allies. Is it or is it not true, that, in the course of the last campaign only, there surrendered prisoners of war to the French republic more than 60,000 men? If this is true, ought it not to induce a British House of Commons to go into this inquiry before we proceed further in a war which has brought so many calamities upon all who have had any share in carrying it on, and which has exhausted so much blood and treasure? Ought we not to go into a Committee of Inquiry to satisfy ourselves of the real extent of British population, and to ascertain whether the country is able to bear such drains of men for the purposes of war? If we go into this inquiry, I will venture to assert that I speak far below the truth when I say, that, during the last campaign only, more than 60,000 men of all descriptions have surrendered to the republic of France. We all know that it is supposed, and I hope it is true, that this country has of late years increased very much in population. That increase, however, has not been in proportion to its increase of wealth and prosperity. I beg leave to have recourse to some documents, which have been laid before the House to give us information with respect to the plan lately adopted for manning his Majesty's navy. From these documents (upon which I suppose we may rely) we have an account of facts which, to many persons, may appear, as undoubtedly they appear to me, somewhat surprising. From the account contained in these papers, we find that the whole

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number of houses in Great Britain now paying taxes to government does not materially differ from the number of houses paying taxes to government in 1777, a period of eighteen years during which we are supposed to have advanced so much in point of wealth and splendour. I know that many persons reject this account, and say it cannot be true, because it is contrary to general observation. Now with respect to houses paying taxes it most certainly is correct; and it may be asked, whether the great increase of houses of late is of such as pay taxes, or of cottages of the lower sort which are exempted. I have another observation to make on this paper. I immediately turned my eye to those places where I conceived that the population had most increased. I looked at Middlesex and Lancaster, and I found, according to this paper, that the increase there has been considerable, and likewise in some other places; but that in other counties of Great Britain this increase seems to be balanced by a general decrease, and therefore the paper on the table, though not wholly to be relied on, is not wholly to be rejected. The increase in the two counties of Middlesex and Lancaster, which I have just mentioned, confirms the accuracy of the statement. The result then seems to be, as I have already said, that the population of Great Britain has not increased in proportion to its apparent wealth and prosperity, and that it cannot afford to repair the loss of blood which it has already suffered by the war.

But it may be said, His Majesty has other dominions from which resources of men may be procured: I particularly allude to Ireland, to which, before I sit down, it may be proper for me to advert. There is no one circumstance in which our sister kingdom, from her happy connexion with this country, is of more importance than in the number of men which she furnishes to the army and navy of Great Britain in time of war; and if, by any strange and crooked policy, that country should be alienated in affection from this, and lose that zeal which has commonly marked and distinguished her in the public cause—I say, if any strange or misguided policy should unfortunately produce such an effect, it is obvious that all the observations I have made on the population of this country, and its inadequacy to support such a ruinous war as that in which we are now engaged, all these arguments will be strengthened to a degree which those who are not well acquainted with this subject can scarcely conceive.

The next article of resource which I mentioned is that of money. We have now in the course of this war funded somewhat above 50,000,000*l.* and when we add to that the increase of unfunded debt, we shall find we have already incurred an expence of between sixty and seventy millions; I trust

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I shall not be thought to have overstated it, by any man who has paid the least attention to the subject. We have for that purpose raised taxes of a permanent sort of about 3,000,000*l.* sterling per annum. I do not affect to speak with perfect accuracy and correctness upon this subject; but the permanent taxes of this country which have been imposed in consequence of the present war, cannot be at this moment much less than three millions sterling. Now it is said, though the permanent taxes of the country have been increased in order to supply the exigences of the state; yet they are not such taxes as will be felt severely by the poor; they are not such taxes as will be felt by the people in general. How far some of them have been well selected or not, is a question, on which I shall not take up the time of the House. I shall only observe, if they are necessary, they must be borne, unless others that are better can be substituted in their place. But to say that the taxes of last year, and particularly those of the present year will not fall, and fall with terrible weight on the middling ranks of the people of this country, who are the great supporters of the state, is to speak without any knowledge of the situation of the country. It is true, as has been said, that it is proper to tax luxuries and vanity in preference to the necessities of life. It is proper to tax heavily the higher orders of society, because they are well able to bear the burden. But it has been falsely supposed, that in proportion as the rich are taxed the poor are relieved. In the present state of this country, those taxes which Ministers call taxes on luxuries fall very heavy indeed on the most numerous class of society, and consequently must fall with peculiar pressure on the poorest class. The idea of imposing taxes which shall fall upon one class only, and shall in no degree be felt by the others, however plausible and specious it may appear in theory, is in fact an idle dream. We cannot lay a tax on the poor that will not fall on the rich; and, I am sorry to say, it is not possible to impose a tax on the rich which will not be felt by the poor.

We have therefore contracted near seventy millions of new debt in the prosecution of the present war, which has produced near three millions per annum of permanent taxes to be paid by the inhabitants of this country. But let us admit for a moment that these three millions are not a burden too heavy for the people to bear—if this war is to go on, let me ask the right honourable gentleman opposite to me, whether he has considered of the absolute necessity of imposing burdens for the next campaign to as great an amount, and possibly to a much greater extent than any which this country has yet experienced? For, if the war goes on, our burdens must necessarily increase in proportion to the length of its duration. Let it not be said

in answer to this, "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." This is not an answer fit for a statesman to use, and is not the answer which a British House of Commons groaning under an intolerable load of taxes ought to receive. This House ought to look to the probability of future expenditure. We ought to calculate on the continuation of the war, and to consider what are the resources by which it is to be supported. We ought to consider how far the people of this country are able to bear more taxes, and how far the different branches of our trade and manufactures are capable of supporting additional duties; for that more will be necessary in the course of the next year is what no man will dispute. Do not all these circumstances incontestably prove that it is the bounden duty of this House to go into an investigation of the present state of the country, and to prove to our constituents and the country at large, that, as we have not spared their blood and their treasure, so we shall not spare our own labour or our own responsibility? It is only by entering into this investigation, and by comparing the object with the means, that we can determine whether we ought to renounce the object, or change the means by which the object is to be obtained; or whether we are to continue the same hopeless object with the same hopeless means; whether with the same administration, with the same advisers, we are to persevere in a system which has hitherto produced nothing but the greatest degree of misfortune and misery.

It is said, however, that our resources are supported by the trade and manufactures of the kingdom, and that these are in a most flourishing condition. In order to see how far this assertion is well founded, let us a little examine the state of the trade and manufactures of the kingdom; and first of its manufactures. I wish to refer to those counties where the manufactures of Great Britain have been carried to the greatest perfection, and to know of those gentlemen who are infinitely better acquainted with the state of those counties than I can pretend to be, what their opinion is with respect to those manufactures, and what effect the present war has had upon them. I wish to know of those gentlemen, whether the manufactures have not been most materially injured by the war; and whether the circumstance of their appearing to have suffered less last year, than in the year preceding, was not owing to our gaining the possession of the French West India islands. I wish to know whether this was not one of the fortunate circumstances which had the effect to afford a temporary relief, but to the duration of which we cannot look with any reasonable prospect. If we go into a Committee, we shall have laid before us of course, accounts with regard to the general exports of the country. We heard on a former day, when the
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right honourable gentleman opened the ways and means of the year, accounts given of the amount of the exports of British manufactures in the years 1792, 1793, 1794. We were then told that the amount of British exports in the year 1792 was upwards of eighteen millions sterling—That the exports of British manufactures in the year 1793 were less than those of the year 1792, by the sum of four millions—and that the exports of British manufacture in the year 1794 exceeded those of 1793 by two millions, and consequently were only two millions short of 1792. Now the loss in the first year of the war being two-ninths of the whole exports of British manufactures, must strike at the very root of our commerce. This is a loss which must impress every man, and must go to affect the very basis of our prosperity. The circumstance of the exports of British manufactures last year being two millions more than they were in 1793, is easily to be accounted for. I appeal to those gentlemen who are best acquainted with the commercial districts of the kingdom, whether it was not in a great measure owing to the sanguine speculations of some gentlemen in consequence of our lately acquired possessions in the French West India islands. I would ask those who are acquainted with the county palatine of Lancaster, what has been the diminution of population since the commencement of the present war. I have seen papers myself, the contents of which, if this inquiry goes on, I shall state to the House. According to those papers, the diminution of population and of manufactures in Manchester and its neighbourhood was to a degree that would astonish the House. We have no very accurate mode in Great Britain of ascertaining the population of the country. We have no better method than by taking the number of marriages and baptisms. I have seen papers with regard to a great number of parishes in the most populous part of the county I have mentioned, Lancashire; and the state of diminution, taken from a calculation of marriages and baptisms, is in some places one half, in others one third, and in none less than one fourth; but in all a constant diminution, and in the largest parish of Manchester, the diminution is estimated at one half, that is, reduced from an hundred to fifty, and that to a number so large as to make the total diminution of the inhabitants amount to about twelve thousand. That this should be the consequence of the war is exceedingly natural. But I would ask the House whether, when we are risking every thing, and when the very existence of the country is at stake, it does not become them to ascertain the truth, which can only be done by an inquiry into the true state of our population and of our manufactures, instead of trusting to the absurd and idle expressions of the inexhaustible resources of the country in wealth and population.

pulation. The information we might receive from a serious inquiry into the real state of our population, might induce us to change our means, or perhaps to change our object.

Now, Sir, another part of the resources of this country is our trade and commerce, as distinguished from our manufactures. With respect to the trade of this country, when I made a motion last year for an inquiry into the conduct of the Admiralty; after taking considerable pains in stating a great variety of instances, where, as I conceived, the Admiralty were highly negligent of their duty in protecting the trade of the country, I received this short answer—"Look to the low rate of insurance." Having found that to be an argument so powerful with this House, I took some pains to inquire into the state of insurance, and shall state some circumstances on this subject, which appear to me to afford sufficient ground for going into this inquiry. It may be supposed that the motion respecting the admiralty might give rise to an opinion among the underwriters, that it would induce ministry to be a little more attentive to the protection of our trade in future, so as to make the risk somewhat less. I am not now deciding whether that be true or false; but it certainly was calculated to keep down the rate of insurance. The fact however is, that insurance from that time has been uniformly rising, until it has come to its present most enormous rate; a rate so enormous, as the House may perhaps find some difficulty to believe till the fact shall be ascertained by an inquiry. At present, insurance from this country to Jamaica, and to the other parts of the West Indies, with all the alliances we possess, is as high as it was in the late American war, when this country had to contend with France, Spain, Holland, and America. With so many powers in confederacy, and France now our single enemy, insurance to the West Indies is as high as it was at that time when we had so many powers leagued against us, and when the fleets of France and Spain united were confessedly superior in number to the fleets of Great Britain.

With regard to the Mediterranean trade, strange to tell! at this period, after all that we have expended on the fleet there, insurance to that quarter is much in the same situation as it was during the last war.

With respect to the trade with Spain and Portugal, the present rate of insurance will appear to be as high as I have now stated it. With respect to the state of our trade with Spain, I understand that it is totally stopped with some of the ports of that country, on the ground, that insurance is so high that the trade cannot be carried on. The insurance from Great Britain to Bilboa, or to Barcelona, is from twenty-five to thirty guineas per cent. and what adds to this is, that merchants

are not only obliged to insure the cargo, but also the premium on it, otherwise it was clear they would only receive 7cl. in the hundred: admitting the premium to be from twenty-five to thirty guineas, the real rate of insurance must then be from thirty-six to thirty-seven per cent. Now, whether it is possible that the trade of this or of any other country can support such a rate of insurance, is for those who are better acquainted with this subject than I am, to explain. But, when you find trade, considered as the principal source of revenue, thus affected by insurance, it then becomes a matter of material consideration. I believe no trade whatever can go on with this rate of insurance, and therefore another mode has been adopted. Owing to this high insurance to Spain and Portugal, a great part of our manufactures have been sent to Hamburgh, and from thence have been conveyed in neutral vessels to Spain and Portugal. The same fatality that has accompanied every part of the war has been felt here; the price of insurance between this country and Hamburgh, which was formerly only one or one and a half per cent. has now increased to ten per cent. I have stated insurance all along as if it were now as good as at any former period; but this is not the case, for reasons which I have already assigned; on the contrary, the trade of insurance is now almost totally ruined.

There is another circumstance to which it is very material to advert. Formerly when this subject was before the House, facts were stated to shew that insurance was not only very low, but also that it was extremely advantageous to the underwriters. But is not the fact directly the reverse now? Has not the credit of the underwriters been greatly diminished in consequence of the losses they have lately sustained? Although individual underwriters may be found, who will underwrite policies at seven per cent. merchants are willing to pay companies ten per cent. on account of their superior security. So low is the credit of the underwriters. This clearly shews that, high as the premium is, it has not been high enough to insure the underwriters. I mention these facts with respect to insurance, because without them my argument would have been incomplete. I have not stated the present rate of insurance, with any view to shew how ill our naval force has been employed for the protection of our trade; but I have stated it with this single view, to prove that, by the high price of insurance, there is every reason to believe that trade and commerce, the great basis on which your revenue and power stand, are affected in a considerable degree; and therefore, that it is of the utmost importance to consider the real state in which we stand at present, in order that we may know our weakness as well as our strength; before we proceed further in this ruinous system.

I now

I now come, Sir, to consider of the next point to which I alluded.—I mean our connections with other nations. Surely it is hardly credible that a British House of Commons should so far forget their duty as to vote away, of the public money, sums never before heard of; and persist in the prosecution of a war, without even knowing whether you have any allies; or, if you have, who they are; what are their situation and circumstances; what their abilities and inclinations. It is material for this House to know who the allies of this country are. I have frequently asked the Right Honourable Gentleman questions with respect to the Emperor, and the King of Sardinia, but I have never received any satisfactory answer. Is the King of Prussia an ally of this country, at this moment, or not? Am I to take it for granted, without giving myself the trouble to inquire whether so material a personage is or is not our ally? I know he was your ally by treaty in 1788. I know he was your ally by convention in 1793; and further, that he was your ally by subsidy in 1794: but I ask whether he is your ally at this moment. I wish to ask this question:—Did the King of Prussia fulfil the treaty* for which the subsidy was granted? If he did, why was it discontinued? If he did not, ought not this House to be apprised of his breach of faith? Ought not this House to be informed of the moment in which he ceased to be our ally? It is indispensably necessary for the honour of this country, that this House should have a perfect knowledge of the whole of this business; for without that knowledge we cannot pass a judgment, we cannot declare an opinion on the conduct of the King of Prussia. If when we go into this inquiry we shall find that he has kept his engagements with this country, we shall be enabled to do justice to that much injured monarch. But if, as I suspect, he has not, is it not fit that this House should call to account the King's ministers for having squandered away such immense sums of the public money? An inquiry, in every point of view, will be productive of advantage; for, by going into a committee, we shall be enabled to see distinctly whether the King of Prussia has fulfilled his treaties; and, if he has, I am sure this House will be disposed to do ample justice to so good a prince.—But if the contrary shall turn out to be the case; if it appear that he has notoriously failed in the performance of his engagements;—is it not material that this House should declare its indignation at such a conduct to its constituents, and to the nations of Europe; and shew that they will not tamely suffer themselves to be so played upon, and so duped, by any prince in future? If the King of Prussia is no longer an ally of ours,

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. II. p. 9.

what becomes of his other treaties? Let me remind the House, that the King of Prussia was to send into the field 62,000 men, but you were only to pay for 30,000 men. In consequence of the treaty of 1788, he was to furnish you with 32,000 men without any additional subsidy;—what then has become of that treaty? We readily gave a subsidy to the King of Prussia to furnish us with 30,000 men. He was bound by a former treaty to furnish us with 32,000 men for nothing: but it now turns out that we have not only lost the 30,000 men we subsidised, but we have also lost the 32,000 we were to have for nothing, in virtue of his previous engagements.—You give him millions more than you originally stipulated; but instead of receiving more, you lose the whole.—Now I ask, is such conduct to be borne? and are we to be told of the advantages to be derived from alliance with regular governments, and of the dependence to be placed on the regular government of Prussia?—France is not a regular government, and we have heard much of the danger of treating in any shape with her: but Prussia, you were told, you may rely on; and the result has been, that instead of having what you stipulated and paid for in the last instance, you lose what you were intitled to by previous agreement. And, notwithstanding this flagrant conduct of the King of Prussia, a British House of Commons consents to squander away the wealth of this country, to lose the whole army supposed to be purchased by it, merely because the Minister chooses to say he is not informed of the particulars of the breach of that treaty.—The question now is, whether this matter is to be inquired into or not? The Minister adds, that even admitting that the King of Prussia has not sent into the field the armies he undertook to send, it is not thence, in fairness of reasoning, to be inferred, that our other allies will not be faithful to their engagements. I have heard it asserted in this House, that the King of Prussia continued to execute a part of his stipulation for a considerable time, and that the payment, on our part, was discontinued when he failed in the performance of his engagement. It was asserted by an Honourable Baronet, that the part he acted was more beneficial to the common cause, than if he had strictly and literally conformed to the terms of the treaty. Let this curious assertion be inquired into and ascertained. If it shall be proved, let the House do their duty, and render justice to that ill-treated monarch; let them declare that ministers have acted towards him with treachery and injustice; or if not, let them do justice to ministers, and declare that their conduct has been wise and upright.

But, Sir, at this moment, I have no perfect means of information as to what we have to look for in the prosecution of the war. I have read in some of the newspapers that the King of

Prussia is sending a large army to the Rhine, and in others, that he considers the Rhine as a proper boundary for France; it was said that he was marching towards Westphalia against the French, and by others that he was marching against the allies. We ought to know precisely the truth. I wish to know what probability there is that he will be our ally, or that he will be our enemy, or that he will remain in a state of neutrality?—What demands have been made from this country with a view to an explanation, and in what manner has he treated the applications of the British Ministry for that purpose?—I want to know what communications have passed, and what remonstrances have been made;—for remonstrances must have been made, or Ministers must have grossly neglected their duty.

The treaty of 1788 was a defensive treaty. France declared war against us; and therefore, say the Gentlemen on the other side of the House, we were forced into the war by their aggression.—I confess I shall doubt their sincerity, unless they have called upon the King of Prussia to perform his treaty. Although his Majesty's Ministers might say to the King of Prussia, "We have been attacked by France, and therefore call upon you to assist us, agreeably to your treaty," that Monarch might have replied, "No; I know better, though you have procured a confiding parliament to say so:—you were the aggressors, and therefore I am not bound in consequence of my treaty, which was only defensive, to furnish you with 30,000 men."—I ask the British House of Commons, whether they can so far lull their consciences to rest, and so scandalously betray their constituents, as to go on in these circumstances without inquiring what the conduct of the King of Prussia has been to this country, and reciprocally what our conduct has been to him.—I warn the House of the mischief which may follow, if they thus go on in the prosecution of the war without taking the means to come to a decision upon this subject.

There is another answer which may possibly be made by the King of Prussia in vindication of his conduct, and which would explain the assertion of the Honourable Baronet.—He may say, "The object of this war was not the saving or gaining of this or that particular province, the capture of a town, or the recovery of a fortress.—The object of it was the suppression of those Jacobine principles that were subverting all regular governments."—He may say, (as had been stated by the Honourable Baronet) "I have done better for you than you have done for yourselves. It was essential to crush Jacobine principles in Poland. You fought for morality, religion, and the order of society. I fought to suppress those anarchical principles which went to the destruction of all regular governments."

ments. — Who was of the greatest service to the common cause—he that took a town, a city, a fortress, or an island—or he that prevented Jacobine principles from taking root in Poland, and dashed the cup of rising freedom from the lips of that abominable people?” The destruction of even one man—the destruction of Kosciusko—who by his character gave credit to the cause of liberty, and by the ardour of his zeal animated the sacred flame in every congenial bosom throughout Europe—what signified the recovery of Flanders or the preservation of Holland to the capture of Kosciusko?—The destruction of this man, and with him of the seeds of growing liberty, tended more to the advantage of the *real cause of the confederacy*, than any co-operation with their troops, which might have been the means of saving Holland or of recovering Brabant.

If so, the country should know, through the medium of this House, that his Majesty’s Ministers have advanced twelve hundred thousand pounds to the King of Prussia, to enable him to subdue Poland; for without our assistance he could not have effected what he has done in that country; and if he had not been employed in that quarter, he would have done as much for the common cause against France as he has done, *which is just nothing*. Does it not become us to inquire into this business, in order that we may drive disgrace from ourselves to those on whom it ought to attach?

The King of Prussia, I suppose, is no longer to be considered as our ally: but if he is—I have spoken of his inclination—let us now look to his ability, and consider how far he is to be depended upon. From an authentic paper, I find him stating to the Diet of the Empire his situation; in which he declares it is utterly impossible for him to continue this war. He announced, about twelve months ago, that he had actually begun to withdraw his troops from the Rhine homewards, on the ground of his incapacity (in a pecuniary point of view) to support such large armies; and he continued to withdraw his troops until he received assistance from us. It is therefore clear, that, without additional pecuniary aid from this country, whether willing or unwilling, he is totally incapable of prosecuting the war; and therefore, if we are to look upon him as an ally, he must be subsidized or hired; nay possibly we may be obliged to purchase his neutrality—and even in that case I know not but he may make you pay for every man of his troops. Therefore, whether you look on the King of Prussia, as I do, as much more likely to assist the French than to co-operate with you, at all events you must consider him as a person gone off from the alliance, and wholly to be bought anew. I shall therefore no longer consider him as an ally.

I now come to our great friend, the Emperor. I am told that it is most unjust indeed to reason from Prussia to Austria, or from Leopold to Francis; and that the present Emperor is a personage of unfulfilled integrity; that we are not to judge of him from the character of some of his predecessors; and that we are to consider the court of Vienna as completely unblemished in point of honour. We find that the Emperor has made declarations nearly to the same effect as those of the King of Prussia. In the declarations * published by the Prince of Cobourg, he says to the people of Germany, "You must take your plate from your table—you must take your plate from your altars—you must collect all your valuables, whether profane or sacred—you must put all the property you possess in a state of requisition; for without such extraordinary exertions the Emperor cannot carry on the war." But, it may be said, we will enable him to come forward with a large force, by granting, in aid of his resources, a loan of four or six millions. Now if the Emperor, either from inclination or inability, should fail in his engagements, and should, contrary to his character of good faith, neglect to perform his treaty, we have not even that miserable tie on him which we had on the King of Prussia. When the Emperor ceases to perform his treaty we cannot stop our payments, because the Emperor says, "Give me it all at once." Our money therefore is absolutely necessary to enable him to stir in the first instance; and therefore if, from either want of ability or any other circumstance, he should fail to perform his treaty, it is most obvious that the whole money which we advance him must be totally and irrecoverably lost. And further, if so large a sum is necessary to enable his Imperial Majesty to act in the present campaign, will not an equal or a larger sum be wanted for the next campaign if the war should continue? And therefore gentlemen must clearly see that the whole of the expence and burden of the war will fall on this miserable and devoted country. At the period we entered upon this war we were promised the assistance of all Europe; and now it is found that, in less than twenty-four months, the whole burden of the war devolves on Great Britain.

But we have other allies—We have allies in Italy and Spain. But although we pay great subsidies to the Italian princes, we have scarcely heard of a movement in that quarter. Indeed, were we to consult the London Gazette for the year 1794, we might suppose Spain and Italy to be neutral powers, as it does not take the least notice of their military operations during that period. With respect to the King of Sardinia, our first

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. II. p. 145.

ally in Italy, whatever gentlemen may have thought in different periods of this war, it is possible, if he had enjoyed a real and *bona fide* neutrality, it would have been much more beneficial to this country than any diversion which he has been able to make. With regard to those attempted in the south of France, what advantage the cause of the allies has reaped from those diversions I am at a loss to discover, and I believe this House is yet equally to learn.

We have another ally—the King of Spain. Now what is the state of Spain? It is of importance for us to turn our regards to the present situation of that country. A great part of its north-eastern provinces have already been conquered by France; Bilboa and Barcelona are in a considerable degree of danger. Do you look then to the Spanish monarchy as possessed of any force to act against France with effect? or is it not that part of the alliance which is the most weak, and on which it is likely the French will soon make such an impression, as ultimately to decide the whole fate of the war in that kingdom?—I was told there was such a fund of vigour in that country, as would make them rise in a mass against France. When that came to the trial, there was no cause which apparently so much contributed to the failure, or afforded such strong ground of suspicion, as the individual treachery of the officers of the King of Spain—in no quarter was there so much cause for jealousy or of a want of disposition to resist the French. It may be asked, Was Figueres taken by the French? or did it not surrender? It is extremely probable that French intrigue upon this occasion has operated more than French force. It was also supposed that the bigoted attachment of the Spaniards to the Roman Catholic religion would inspire them with vigour against the French, who are supposed to have trampled upon all religion;—but was this the case? We know the reverse to be the fact.

But what is the state of Spain in other respects? Of all parts of Spain, there is none in which there is so much vigour, and so much real force, as in Catalonia; into the heart of which the French have penetrated. What was the history of that people? When the French had, by their arms, made a considerable progress in this province, the people of Barcelona determined to resist their further progress, and to undertake their own defence. Accordingly they sent a deputation to that effect to Madrid, stating that they wished to undertake the defence of the country, and that they would defend it to the last drop of their blood, provided that no Spanish troops were sent to their assistance, except some particular regiments, which they specified, and with which they were acquainted, and provided an assembly of the state was called. This deputation received

no

no answer; or rather, they received a direct refusal; and the French found but too easy a conquest in that province. I mention this to shew to you that Spain is not a country to be depended upon, and that she is one of the weakest of your allies.

The King of Sardinia and the King of Spain were to have made different diversions in aid of the confederacy. The King of Sardinia undertook to make a diversion in Dauphiny, and at this moment the French are masters of Nice and Savoy.—Spain engaged to make a diversion in Roussillon, and the French are now in possession of Navarre, Biscay, and Catalonia. All these allies, therefore, upon whose exertions so much dependance was placed by the Ministers of this country, are now only so many dead weights upon our treasury.

Are the Spaniards in a much better situation in regard to their finances? It is true they have not yet called upon this country for a subsidy; but they must either soon make that application, or, what will be much more beneficial for themselves, make a separate peace with France. They have had recourse to measures of finance of a very extraordinary nature. I shall name one of them. Gentlemen will recollect that an honourable friend of mine, not long ago, made a motion in this House for laying a moderate tax on all offices and employments under government during the war. The House will recollect with what ridicule that motion was received. It was considered as a paltry resource, to which no nation, that was not utterly exhausted in its finances, ought to resort:—But what has the King of Spain done? The Spanish court has laid a duty of four per cent. universally upon every person enjoying any office in Spain above one hundred and fifty pounds per annum, and a tax of twenty-five per cent. upon the salaries of all his councillors of State, for the support of the present war*. I am not commending this resource; I am only stating it, to shew what the situation is of Spain with respect to her finances; and how little the allies can rely on that country for support in the prosecution of the war. This is the true situation of our allies, according to the best information which I have been able to procure; and is not this an additional argument for going into an inquiry into the state of the nation, in order to ascertain distinctly, from authentic documents, the precise degree of dependance we ought to have on our connections with other powers?

I shall next proceed to the consideration of our conduct in a different point of view; and examine what strength we have derived from the estimation which rectitude and dignity,

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. II. p. 178.

moderation and justice, might have procured us in the eyes of Europe. I am one of those who firmly believe, as much indeed as man can believe any thing, that the greatest resource a nation can possess, the surest principle of power, is strict attention to the principles of justice. I firmly believe that the common proverb, of honesty being the best policy, is as applicable to nations as to individuals; that this, which the conviction of mankind has made an axiom, is universally true; and that cases which may sometimes be supposed exceptions, arise from our taking narrow views of the subject, and being unable at once to comprehend the whole. If therefore we have been deficient in justice towards other states, we have been deficient in wisdom, and have enfeebled our arm in our efforts against the enemy. Justice is fairly to be ranked among the number of our resources; and it is the duty of the House to look back, and inquire whether or not our conduct, since the commencement of the war, has been such as to entitle us to the good opinion of the wise and observing part of mankind. I am not now going to discuss the justice of entering into the war; but I wish to call the attention of the House to the conduct of the King's Ministers in prosecuting it. For whatever might have been the motives which induced Ministers to enter upon it, the means they have employed in carrying it on are fit subject for examination in this House. When we entered upon this war, we were sanguine enough to suppose that all the civilized part of the world would see it with the same eyes as we did. When I represented in this House, that the plan of starving France adopted by Ministers was absurd and impracticable, for that France would receive supplies from neutral nations; when I stated the means by which neutral nations might supply France; I was answered, that in this war the neutral nations would be very few, if any. But what is the case at the end of two years? That neutral nations are many and increasing; and that the great neutral nation, America, has continued neutral from the beginning. It is of infinite importance to a nation that respects its honour—that even respects its interest, which is inseparable from its honour—to gain the good opinion of surrounding nations for justice, magnanimity, and moderation. Has Great Britain done this, or the reverse? What has been your conduct to Sweden, to Denmark, to Genoa, to Tuscany, to Switzerland, to America while you durst? I do not speak of any particular Minister at foreign courts; for many of those Ministers I feel great respect, and with some of them I am connected by friendship. I am ready to admit that, if they acted contrary to their instructions, or on their own mere suggestions without instructions, Ministers at home are not responsible for their conduct; but

but I am persuaded that they did act according to their instructions ; for, if they did not, Ministers here were bound to recall them, and disavow what they had done. I however can at present state only my own belief ; an inquiry will enable us to ascertain the facts beyond dispute.

With respect to America I shall say nothing at present, except that, after giving orders for taking her ships, we recalled those orders, and have since entered into a treaty by which we agree, properly I believe, justly, and if justly, wisely, to pay for the rashness and folly of issuing them. Next, with regard to Denmark and Sweden, which were in this case so intimately connected in point of interest, that whatever was addressed to the one might be considered in fact, although not in form, as addressed to the other. To the court of Copenhagen we presented memorial after memorial, couched in the most peevish and offensive terms of remonstrance, on the neutrality of his Danish Majesty. These memorials were answered * by the Minister, Mr. Bernstoff, with such temper, firmness, and diplomatic knowledge, as obliged us at length to desist, and raised his character higher than that of any Danish Minister ever was before. We engaged in a diplomatic contest upon the subject of neutrality, in which we shewed our complete ignorance of the rights of neutral nations, and were foiled accordingly.

What has been our conduct towards the Grand Duke of Tuscany, a prince who, although belonging to one of the most illustrious families of Europe, is known not to be possessed of any great military power ? Lord Hervey goes to the Grand Duke of Tuscany—not to the Emperor, the King of Prussia, or any potent monarch—and says to him, “ Can you pretend to maintain neutrality with such a government as that of France ? ”—calling the French government all the hard names which *regular* governments think themselves authorized to bestow upon it ; and not recollecting that one of the heaviest accusations against the French was their having presumed to intermeddle in the internal politics of other nations—“ Can you basely refuse joining the league against the murderers of your aunt, the declared enemies of your whole family, and the avowed subverters of all established government, order, and religion ? I know to what cause your hesitation is owing. It is because you give credit to bad Ministers ; it is because you lend too favourable an ear to the advice of your Minister Manfredini, a man who has gained a pernicious ascendancy over your mind, but who ought no longer to have any share in your councils.” Lord Hervey, after thus telling an independent prince that he was not to

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. I. p. 329—331.

listen to the advice of his own Ministers, might with equal propriety have gone on to tell him that he ought to be guided solely by the counsels of the right honourable gentleman over against me. "Your Ministers," he might have said, "are ignorant and incapable; the British Ministers are wise and able. Observe into what a situation they have brought their own country, and you cannot doubt with what wisdom and vigour they will consult for yours."—This language of Lord Hervey has never been disavowed by Ministers. It has even been imitated by his successor, and therefore I must consider it as having been the language of his instructions—and thus by menace and insult was the Grand Duke of Tuscany compelled to renounce his system of neutrality, contrary to his own inclination, to the advice of his Ministers, and the interests of his people. Such was the conduct of Ministers when we were powerful in the Mediterranean. Lord Hervey was at length recalled, and another gentleman whom I personally respect was appointed in his stead, and instructed to follow the same course. At last, after we lose our power in the Mediterranean—when events turn out against us—we submit not only to the neutrality of the Duke of Tuscany, but to his concluding a treaty of peace and amity with the French republic.

In Switzerland Lord Robert Fitzgerald, for whose character I have too high a respect to suppose that he would exceed the letter of his instructions, in the name of the King of Great Britain, tells the independent Swiss Cantons*, in the language of insult and injustice, "That he will not decide, whether justice and their true interest permit them to remain neuter, against those who would again reduce them to barbarism, in a war of almost all the powers of Europe, in a war where not only the existence of every established government, but even that of all kind of property is at stake. He will only observe, that neutrality itself will not authorize any correspondence, directly or indirectly, with the factious or their agents." He tells them in effect, that although they may call themselves neutral, they are not to allow their subjects to reap the benefits of that neutrality by intercourse with France. Who made you the arbiters how far intercourse ought to be allowed by independent states between their respective subjects? Where did you get the right? or, if you have the right, where is your power to enforce it? The Swiss Cantons return a civil and dignified answer, "That a rigid and exact neutrality was the invariable maxim of their ancestors; and having received it as a sacred inheritance, they conceive it their duty to abide by it. That they trust his Britannic Majesty, follow-

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. I. p. 296.

ing the example of his illustrious ancestors, will respect the independence of the Helvetic Confederacy." In the mean time, they carry on their intercourse with France in as high a degree as it is their interest to do, regardless of our menaces; and we have now the mortification to feel that the coarseness of our insult was equalled only by its impotence; we have nothing to boast of, but the rashness of our design, and the meanness of the attempt to carry it into execution.

What has been your conduct towards Genoa? Ministers hold the same language towards that state, and tell them, "If you continue in your neutrality, it must be offensive to the combined powers, and may give occasion to revive claims which must lead to disagreeable consequences:"—a meaner threat never was employed.—Who are the parties in this mighty contest? Great Britain, taking upon herself to dictate for all the combined powers, and the republic of Genoa—this country not only admonishes the republic of Genoa against observing a neutrality, but threatens her with war if she does.—Look at this, and see a picture of insolence, injustice, and meanness, exceeded only by the feebleness of the attempt to follow it up! The fortune of war being against you, even the little republic of Genoa is stout; and after blockading her port, you are content to withdraw your ships, and forced to submit to her neutrality with an ungracious apology for the injustice you have done. By such conduct you have impaired the character of the nation for justice and magnanimity, and given to Great Britain a character of meanness and insolence which was never before imputed to her, a character which has destroyed more countries than the loss of armies. To put this in a stronger point of view, contrast it with your conduct to America—Did you tell America that all intercourse with France was disgraceful, until France should restore her King? No! It is only to the weak and defenceless that you talk big:—To the great and powerful you apologize, and agree to pay for all the injustice you have done them.

Examine the law of nations: if any one question in the law of nations be clearer and more generally acknowledged than another, it is that of a right in every nation, which no treaty obliges to the contrary, to preserve a complete neutrality. Consider the sacredness of this right, and the miserable condition of every weak country, if whenever great powers go to war, for what they may call the cause of justice, order, religion and regular government, but what others may think views of ambition and aggrandizement, every weak prince, every petty republic, were to be compelled to take a part in the contest—If such were to be the condition of society — if men were not allowed to enjoy that neutrality which their inde-
pendence

pendence entitles them to, they would begin to doubt the benefits of society, and listen to the paradoxes of those who maintain, that all established rules and principles are founded in ignorance and error; and that society itself, as at present constituted, is not worth preserving.

If the House agree to a Committee of Inquiry, I shall move that his Majesty's Ministers do lay before us the correspondence between them and their agents at foreign Courts; not for the purpose of injuring or punishing individuals, if it should appear that any of them have deviated from their instructions, but for the purpose of saving the credit and honour of Ministers themselves. If it should turn out, as I believe it will, that our Ambassadors at foreign Courts have acted consistently with the letter and spirit of their instructions—that they have only used the words and sentiments of the Cabinet of Great Britain; then it will become this House to shew that Ministers are not the nation, and that whatever may be their principles, the principles of the nation are justice and magnanimity. It will then become us to shew to our constituents and to all Europe, that we would rather hold high language to the strong and powerful than to the weak and defenceless; that instead of insulting and injuring the weaker States of Europe, our inclination is to protect them against the greatest and most powerful. It will also become us to wipe off from ourselves the stigma arising from the meanness, insolence, pusillanimity, and injustice, which have been manifested on our part towards the particular States I have mentioned.

I shall now, Sir, without considering whether this war was justly or unjustly undertaken, proceed to examine with what wisdom and upon what principles it has been conducted. In doing this I will pass by all the considerations that ought to have preceded our determination to go to war, great and important as in my mind they were, and suppose war actually resolved upon. When we had come to this resolution, was it not, I ask, of the utmost consequence to our success that the object of the war should be clear? No two things can be more distinct from each other than fighting for a country and fighting against it. If Ministers had acted up to the character of statesmen, they would have taken one or other side of this alternative with all its advantages and disadvantages, for advantages and disadvantages each of them must have had. They would have said one of two things: either “We are going to war with France, not on account of her form of government; we care not what form of government is established in France. It is of no consequence to us whether that country be governed by a Monarch, a Convention, or a Jacobin Club:—this is no cause of war. But we go to

war against France to protect our allies the Dutch, and to avenge the insults she has offered to the British nation:" (though I confess I know of no insult offered to the British nation previous to the commencement of this war.) Or they might have taken a very different course; they might have adopted the idea of a right honourable gentleman, who is not now a Member of this House, of whose great genius and distinguished character, although I have lately had the misfortune to differ from him in political opinion, I shall never speak but in terms of the highest respect and admiration. They might have taken the course pointed out by that right honourable gentleman *, who, by an odd figure †, said: "We are not fighting for the Scheldt; we are fighting for France; we are fighting for the destruction of the greatest evil that ever threatened the civilized world, the French revolution; we are fighting for the restoration of monarchy in France; we are fighting for the re-establishment of regular government;—to restore the emigrants to their property, that has been confiscated: we are fighting for the French nation against the French Convention—not for weakening France and aggrandizing Great Britain: we are fighting for our own constitution—our monarchy—our laws—our religion—our property; for unless monarchy be restored in France, monarchy will not be safe in other parts of the world, his Majesty will not be safe upon his throne; unless their property be restored to the emigrants, the property of every man in this House is insecure." When, I say, his Majesty's Ministers determined on the prosecution of this war, they should have made choice of one or other side of this alternative, each of which, as I have just stated, would have had its inconveniences.—If you had chosen the former, and said, "In going to war with France, we wish to have nothing to do with the nature of her government—we are totally indifferent about her internal situation, and only fight to compel her to make atonement for insults offered to us;"—it would have been attended with this inconvenience, you would have had no pretence for expecting the assistance of any French emigrants, or of insurgents in any part of France, except in as far as by resisting the Convention, and endeavouring to promote their own views, they might, without intending it, facilitate the accomplishment of yours. You would have had no claim upon the inhabitants of La Vendée, of Britany, Lyons, Marseilles, or any other place where hatred of the Convention provoked insurrection; because neither with them nor with the French emigrants would you have had any common cause, nor

* Mr. Burke.

† The figure, which Mr. Fox did not repeat, was, "A war about the Scheldt, a war about a chamber-pot."

could you have been understood to offer them protection. You would have had no right to look for the co-operation of those powers, whose object was the restoration of Louis XVII. to the throne, of his ancestors. But, on the other hand, you would have had, what, in my opinion, would have fully compensated all these disadvantages—You would have quarrelled with France on equal terms, and fought with her upon known principles. France could not then have made the efforts she has made. If you had set out with the recognition of the French Republic, and declared that you wished to have no concern with her internal affairs; I ask you this question—Can you imagine it would have been possible for France, in consequence of enthusiasm or terror, or of both combined, to have raised and supported such immense armies, whose vigour and exertions have astonished Europe? Could terror have compelled such exertions and such sacrifices, when the people of France knew that they were only fighting for the Scheldt or Brabant, or some island in the West Indies? Do you think it possible, if such had been the object of the war, for you to have raised up against you what has been emphatically called, and emphatically felt, an armed nation? Would the Convention have been able to persuade them that they were fighting for their liberties, their lives, for every thing that is dear to the heart of man; that they had no choice but victory or death, when they were clearly and distinctly told by us, that the whole contest was about the navigation of the Scheldt, and the security of Holland? But when the whole people of France, in consequence of the declarations of Great Britain, were convinced that their future government, and their very existence as an independent nation were attacked, then they began to rouse themselves; then they began to unite in defence of what they conceived to be their just rights and liberties; and under the influence of this conviction it was that they produced those effects which have astonished the world, and which are unparalleled in the history of nations. If Great Britain at the outset of the war had clearly convinced France, that her only object was the protection of her allies and the vindication of her own honour, no such effects could possibly have been produced. If, on the other hand, the aid of the French emigrants and insurgents in France had been thought an advantage superior to all this, you might have taken the other part of the alternative, and said, “Our object in going to war is to establish a regular form of government in France.” The inconvenience here would have been, that from the very moment of making this declaration, you would have had united against you every republican in France, in that vigorous way in which you now see them united. You would have

have persuaded them, as you have done, that they had no other chance for liberty, than by uniting as an armed nation, with activity and vigour. If you had said at the outset, "We wish not to dismember France; we wish not to partition her territory; we wish not to weaken or diminish her power, or to aggrandize Great Britain at her expence: our sole object is, to restore to her the blessings of a regular government, and to good citizens the enjoyment of their rights and property." In that case you would have had this advantage—every emigrant from France in every part of the world, would have felt in common with the British cause. Every French loyalist would have felt, and would have gone hand and heart with the British nation—Even such republicans as disliked the system of terror, more than they disliked monarchy, would have exerted themselves in your favour. You would then have had a fair opportunity of trying the question—"what were the sentiments of the people of France with respect to the revolution;—and whether a majority of the nation wished for a monarchy or a republic." You would have reared a standard to which Frenchmen who loved their country might repair. Now, by indulging the childish hope of gaining the advantages of each side of the alternative, you have gained the advantages of neither;—you have lost the advantages of both. How could it be otherwise?—When you took Valenciennes, instead of taking it for Louis XVII. you took possession of it in the name of the Emperor FRANCIS.—When Condé surrendered, you did the same thing.—When Mentz surrendered, the garrison was dismissed to be employed against the royalists of La Vendée.—Was it possible for any man to be so ignorant, as to doubt what your intentions were? How then was it possible for you to suppose that your conduct would produce on the inhabitants of France, an effect different from what it has done?—When Sir Charles Grey and Sir John Jervis took Martinique, Guadaloupe, and the rest of the French West India Islands—did they take possession of them for Louis XVII.? No! but for the King of Great Britain, not to be restored to France when monarchy and regular government should be restored, but to be retained as conquests, if the chance of war should leave them in our hands. While such was our conduct in all parts of the world, could it be hoped that any French emigrant, whose situation was not desperate indeed, would join us; or, that all who were lovers of their country more than lovers of royalty, would not be our enemies? To attend to justice is in all cases peculiatly important; and the love of country is a motive so powerful, as to be often used as a pretext, even by those who do not feel it. The Royalists of La Vendée, of Britany, and other places, took the field,

field, and held out long and bravely;—but what could they say to the people of France?—what could they put in their manifestoes, of equal weight with the addresses from the Convention? They might say, “If we conquer, the French monarchy will be restored;—but it will be restored with the territory of France curtailed and diminished, one third of it perhaps divided among rival powers, and we may lose our rank and situation in the number of nations.” The Convention could say, “If we conquer, the French republic will remain entire, a great and independent nation, triumphant over all the powers who have confederated against her liberties.” With such discouragements on the one hand, and such flattering prospects on the other, was it to be expected that any considerable number of emigrants, or of Frenchmen of any description, would connect their own cause with that of the allies? We have so shuffled in our professions, and have been guilty of such duplicity, that no description of Frenchmen will flock to our standard. It was a fatal error in the commencement of the war, that we did not state clearly how far we meant to enter into the cause of the French emigrants — and how far to connect ourselves with powers who, from their previous conduct, might well be suspected of other views than that of restoring monarchy in France. It may, perhaps, be said, that we could not be certain in the first instance how far it might be proper to interfere in the internal affairs of France;—that we must watch events, and act accordingly. By this want of clearness with respect to our ultimate intentions, we have lost more than any contingency could ever promise. All obscurity ought to have been removed, and you ought to have clearly and distinctly adopted one or other side of the alternative I have stated.—Every place was not taken for the allies. It was understood by those who surrendered *Toulon* to Lord HOOD, that he accepted it on this condition — that he was to adhere to the constitution of 1789. Whether Ministers intended to observe that condition I know not;—but in their subsequent publications they gave reason to hope that they did. In their declarations they offered peace and protection to all well disposed Frenchmen, who should join in restoring monarchy, without specifying what kind of monarchy*. Have you fulfilled that promise? What kind of protection have you afforded to those who endeavoured to restore monarchy? Have not the Royalists, for want of assistance or encouragement, been obliged, however reluctantly, to submit to the laws of the Republic? If the allies had been fighting either for France, or against France, what should have been their conduct towards LA FAYETTE and DUMOURIER?

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. I. p. 116, 117, 120, 135, &c.

The seizure of La FAYETTE, by the Austrians, was contrary to the law of nations, and their treatment of him must damn their fame to all eternity, and render their name an object of universal execration. They found him, and the companions of his misfortune, not at the head of an army, or in arms, and took them against all the laws of nations and of war—not to be treated as prisoners of war, but as prisoners to be consigned to a dungeon. If the allies were fighting against France, surely they ought not to have treated as criminals, generals coming over to them from the enemy. DUMOURIER came over when he thought he had great power with his army. That power turned out to be much less than he had imagined;—but it was impossible that a man who had served his country with so much reputation, with so much ability and success, should not have had a considerable party in it.—How was he treated? When they found that he could not bring along with him so large a portion of his army as they expected, after having extolled his virtue*, at the moment when he had rendered his virtue at least doubtful, they drove him from them a wandering fugitive, as if they had passed a decree expressly forbidding any French general to abandon the standard of the Republic in future. By acting in this manner, as is very well expressed in a French pamphlet I have read, “we are more unaccountable in our political conduct than any of the most bigoted religious sects, for we even exclude converts;”—which I believe was never done by any sectarists. Our conduct therefore, in this respect, is perfectly new: for after DUMOURIER becomes a convert to, and espouses the cause of the allies, they refuse to receive him. But if we and our allies were fighting for France against the Convention, we ought to have praised this general as a convert—we ought to have received him with cordiality, and held him up as an example for the conversion of others. If we were fighting against France, we should have considered all Frenchmen as enemies, in the common acceptation of the term, and not by denouncing vengeance for crimes committed in France, as was done by Lord AUCKLAND, in a paper published at the Hague †, have given ground for that enthusiasm of resistance, which inflames the minds of men who conceive their lives to be attacked—an enthusiasm which has united for common defence those who, in every moment of respite, were tearing one another to pieces, and sending their opponents to the scaffold, whenever they could supplant them in power. If the allies were fighting for France, the restoration of monarchy, and regular government, I mean not to say that they

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. I. p. 110.

† See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. I. p. 272.

should have granted impunity to those who were more immediately the cause of the murder of the King:—but they ought not to have begun with thundering forth a manifesto*, threatening Paris with military execution, and even total destruction; denouncing vengeance which necessarily alarmed all men, as no man was named;—a manifesto which we cannot even now endure to read, but by contrasting the pride and cruelty of the menace with the impotence of the attempt at putting it in execution. If we were fighting for France, we ought to have assured the people of France that we had no views of aggrandisement, much less of dismembering the kingdom, or taking vengeance of the inhabitants. We ought to have convinced them that we entered France, not to conquer, but to restore; and the very first step should have been to publish a general amnesty, with some exceptions. A whole nation may be misled, but cannot be all guilty—as has been said by the great man already mentioned, “I know not how to draw an indictment against a whole nation.” Some exceptions to the general amnesty might have been necessary; but these should have been mentioned by name, that others might have had nothing to fear. By this mode of proceeding, many persons deserving of punishment might have escaped;—but this would not have been so bad as terrifying all the people of France individually, by indiscriminate threats. This I conceive to be a fundamental error. I would therefore have the House go into an inquiry, that we may declare this error to be fundamental, if so it shall appear to be;—that we may take some intelligible ground for our future conduct;—define clearly and distinctly the object of the war, and put the remaining quarrel with France upon such a footing, as to shew whether we are really fighting for France as a nation, or against her. Is there a man who believes that, to define our object, and to demand it of the French government, even at the price of recognising that government (as far as to negotiate is a recognition) would render it more difficult to be obtained by force of arms, if the French should refuse to grant it? Does the right hon. gentleman himself believe that, if the Convention were to refuse reasonable terms of peace, they would be able to call forth such extraordinary exertions on the part of the people for continuing the war, as the general persuasion of the people that they have no alternative but conquest or subjugation has hitherto enabled them to call forth?

Having mentioned these great and fundamental errors, it is hardly necessary to enter into those that are more minute. It is almost sufficient to name them. If we took possession

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. I. p. 32.

of Toulon, not with a view to conquest, but with the intention of supporting the cause of monarchy in France, it was the most important advantage we could have obtained, and to the preservation and improvement of which all our attention ought to have been directed. Yet we left Toulon with a very small English force, trusting its defence to the aid of allies, who were either unable or unwilling to defend it. This was said to be done for the sake of an expedition against the French West India islands, an expedition of much less importance than the defence of Toulon; and that expedition was again crippled by collecting troops under the Earl of Moira for a descent upon the coast of France—a descent for which an opportunity has never yet been found; and therefore government has never been able in any way to avail itself of the force so collected. In consequence of this, Toulon was lost; and a number of troops was sent to the West Indies, sufficient indeed, through the zeal and ability of the commanders, to take the islands, but not sufficient to keep them. Guadaloupe we know is gone; there is little hope of our being now in possession of any part of St. Domingo; and we are far from being without well-grounded apprehensions for the safety of Martinico and the other conquered islands.

With respect to the last campaign, our great and leading error was, confidence in the King of Prussia, in the Belgians, and in the Dutch. It was evident *a priori* that our confidence was ill-founded, and *a posteriori* it has proved to be so.—We told the people of the Austrian Netherlands that we were fighting for their religion, and the people of the United Provinces, that we were fighting for their liberties; but they did not believe us. We forced the Dutch into a war, which they had no inclination to undertake. So early as the beginning of the year 1793, I stated it as my opinion, that the Dutch would not demand our assistance. I was answered, that they durst not demand it, but that this was no reason for our withholding it, and that, if it was offered, they would not refuse it. I replied, that I believed the case to be exactly the reverse, and that if you offered your assistance, although the Dutch did not desire it, yet they durst not refuse it. I also find, at an early period of the war, the people of Frizeland putting up their prayers to Almighty God, to deliver them from this war, into which they had been plunged by their allies. All that has happened since has confirmed my opinion. While we were fighting in the Austrian Netherlands, the Dutch gave us but feeble and reluctant aid. When we were driven out of the Austrian Netherlands, and the United Provinces were to be defended, the Dutch, instead of rising in a mass to defend them, joined in welcoming the French. We ought to have known

known before hand, that the people of the United Provinces wished not to be defended by us, and therefore were not to be confided in as allies. We ought to have adopted one of two courses; we should either have withdrawn our mischievous and oppressive protection, and said to the Dutch "defend yourselves;" or we should have taken possession of the country with an army, and defended it like a conquered province.

When I look to the naval part of the campaign, I find, that the captures made by the enemy are greater than they were ever known to be in any former war; but I do not find that our trade has increased in the same proportion. By documents, which I conceive to be tolerably correct, it appears that in the second year after France joined in the American war, the number of ships captured by France, Spain, and America was 499. How many of these were taken by Spain, I do not know; but it is probable that nearly one half of them were taken by the Americans. In the second year of this war, when we have France alone to contend with, the number of ships belonging to Great Britain which have been captured by France amounts to 860. Until I hear this extraordinary difference, under circumstances so much less unfavourable than those of the period to which I have alluded, accounted for, I must conclude that there has been a great defect in the naval administration of this country; either that we have not had a sufficient naval force, or that Ministers have not well applied it. His Majesty's speech from the throne in January 1794*, laid the ground of most forcible arguments for inquiry. That speech, in recapitulating the advantages obtained by the arms of the allied powers, as the pledge and earnest of still greater advantages, almost expressly assured us of the empire of the sea. O the little foresight of presumptuous men! O the fallacy of human hope! Every pledge of success, every topic of consolation, held out to us in that speech, is now converted into a circumstance of defeat, into an argument for despair! "The United Provinces," we were told, "have been protected from invasion; the Austrian Netherlands have been recovered and maintained; places of considerable importance have been acquired on the frontiers of France; an important and decisive blow has been given to their naval power; at sea our superiority has been undisputed, and our commerce so effectually protected that the losses sustained have been inconsiderable, in proportion to its extent, and to the captures made on the contracted trade of the enemy." Yet in the course of a year ushered in with so much promise, our superiority at sea has been disputed; after a second more important and decisive blow given to the enemy's naval power,

* See Debrett's State Papers, Vol. II. p. 456.

they have been masters of the sea for two months; and 860 of our ships have been taken. Every hope and expectation held out by that speech, is now completely gone. There is not one single ground stated by the King with respect to the probable good events of the war which has not been entirely done away. We have lost the fortresses on the French frontier. We have lost the Austrian Netherlands. We have lost Holland; and the trade of England has been greatly injured. It is not the change of one man; it is not the change of the first lord of the Admiralty, that will make satisfaction for the injury sustained by our commerce. I observe likewise that since the commencement of the present war, the recaptures do not bear a greater proportion to the ships taken than they did in the American war, when Great Britain had so many different nations against her. Are these, or are they not good grounds for inquiry? For what purpose do gentlemen think they were sent to this house? Do they believe they were sent here for the sole purpose of voting taxes, as was too often the case with the parliaments of the ancient kings of this country? or as a national council to see that the executive government is not only incorrupt, but judicious? It might have been supposed that after the memorable first of June we should be masters of the sea; but we have no reason to boast of the manner in which we have improved that victory. Our fleet came into port in November, and the French fleet put to sea; no doubt because ours was returned. So little foresight or exertion was displayed in preparing our fleet for sea again, that it could not go out till late in January; and thus for two months the French were masters of the sea, and your fleets of merchantmen, and even troops embarked for important foreign services, were blocked up in your ports. I shall perhaps, be told, "That our fleet cannot be always out." I say, that under proper management, a great part of it always might be out. But were two months necessary? Will any man contend that it might not have been ready in less than two months, during great part of which time it was known that the French fleet was out? There was even a rumour that after the ships were ready for sea they were detained for want of biscuit and other provisions, which it became necessary to send by land carriage. How true these reports may be I know not; but they have been generally circulated and generally believed, which is a sufficient reason why you should inquire, that their truth or falsehood may be ascertained. Every one of the circumstances I have mentioned calls aloud for inquiry, unless the members of this House be prepared to say that our present circumstances, the present situation of the country, are so happy and so prosperous as to be *prima facie* evidence

evidence of the diligence and ability of his Majesty's Ministers; that they have steered us so steadily, and piloted us so wisely, that we ought to repose implicit confidence in them without inquiry, and deliver over to them all the functions of the House of Commons. Can Ministers themselves state any one ground why this House ought to repose in them any confidence whatever, much less such extraordinary confidence as this? Will they say that their administration of the war has been successful, or that the state of the country is prosperous? I am not, I hope, a man to give to success more credit than is due to it; I hope I can reverence unsuccessful wisdom; my own life has not been such as to lead me to think that success should be considered as the criterion of wisdom.—Let the Minister say that the calamities which have befallen the country have been the immediate acts of God; that they have been thunder storms and tempests where human prudence could avail us nothing. But let him not say that Great Britain is declining in every quarter; that she has been reduced in her resources, from a state of unexampled prosperity; that all her exertions, and the most lavish profusion of treasure and of blood, have availed her nothing; and yet deny to this House the propriety of an inquiry, to discover, if possible, the source of such a train of misfortunes. In such a case, it is the duty of every member of this House—of the friends of Ministers themselves, to give up their private confidence and to promote inquiry. If they find that Ministers have been pursuing an impracticable object, or endeavouring to obtain it by inadequate means, they will then know how to apply the remedy. They may, if they please, even after finding that Ministers have been wrong, grant them a new lease of their confidence; but they will first point out to them their error, and give them wholesome advice for their future conduct. If, on the other hand, they find that Ministers have been pursuing wise ends by wise means; that although their success has not hitherto corresponded with their prudence, they have neither been deficient in industry nor skill; they may say with satisfaction to themselves and their constituents, "We will continue our confidence in these Ministers, they have deserved success if they have not obtained it, and perseverance will overcome the malignity of fortune." But until we go fairly into this inquiry, we cannot dissemble that mankind *will* and must continue to suspect that the conduct of Ministers has not been such as it ought to have been; that it has been erroneous in some way or other.

Sir, exhausted as I feel myself, and long as I have already trespassed on the patience of the House, I must pass over in silence many points which are nearly connected with the general statement, and which would call powerfully on this House

to enter into an inquiry on the state of the nation. But although I conceive I have already stated sufficient ground for going into such an inquiry on all the questions more immediately connected with the war; there is yet one subject so closely connected with the prosecution of it in one point of view, that before I sit down I must beg leave to make a few observations upon it—I mean the present situation of the sister kingdom. The House will do me the honour to recollect that, very much against the inclination of the majority of this House, of the public, of my own constituents, and even of my most intimate friends, I formerly harassed, and, if you please, teased this House, with a variety of considerations, and with different questions which you were unwilling to hear. I persevered obstinately, however, not because I had any personal satisfaction in doing so when the House was not disposed to listen to me, but because I thought that at the outset of the war, it was my bounden duty to lay before this House those circumstances which, as appeared to me, ought to have discouraged us from entering upon it. I felt no pleasure in addressing those arguments to unwilling ears, for I am not desirous of imitating the example of Cardanus, an author whose works, sir, may possibly not be very familiar to you, although you are a learned man, as they are now but little read. This author says, “*Nunquam libentius loquor quam cum quod loquor auditoribus displicet.*” I spoke from no such motive, neither did I like Cardanus persevere the more obstinately as I perceived I was heard more unwillingly. Sir, I persevered because I thought it my duty to persevere; and, among other things, I stated, as discouragements for going on with the war, that the Austrian Netherlands could not be retained, while the subjects of his Imperial Majesty were disaffected to, and even hated, his government; that Holland could not be defended, because the Dutch had been forced into the war against their inclination, and did not wish to defend it; and that the King of Prussia had clearly proved, by his conduct in the first campaign, that Great Britain and her allies ought not to depend upon him. I was then told that my speech was a gross libel upon the characters and conduct of all our actual and all our possible allies.—But, sir, if it was a libel, experience has shewn that it was true, which, according to the common doctrine of lawyers, does not make it less a libel; and I hope that, as far as concerns its *truth*, it will go down to posterity a *convicted libel*. I then also touched upon some dangers which I apprehended with respect to Ireland. I was told, “Touch not upon Ireland, that is a subject too delicate for discussion in this House. This House,” it was said, “has nothing to do with Ireland. Ireland has a Parliament of her own, and will take
care

care of herself." To that I then answered, as I shall do now ; that when a British House of Commons, as the great council of the nation, is advising the King upon a matter of so much importance as peace or war, they ought to extend their consideration to all the most material parts of the empire of Great Britain ; and surely it is unnecessary to state that Ireland is a most important part of his Majesty's dominions, as furnishing great resources of men for the army and the navy in time of war. Without the assistance of Ireland, we can never be secure in peace, and without her assistance we cannot be successful in war. The identity of her constitution, and her being under the same executive government, make Ireland a constant object of attention, from which we may derive information with regard to the King's Ministers, to which we may look for examples to be imitated, or errors to be avoided. Ireland has always been considered as an object of observation to which it is our duty to look. I saw formerly certain prejudices in that country which would throw much difficulty in the way of the Roman catholics getting all they asked, and all that justice required they should have, as subjects of the same constitution, viz. equality of rights with every other subject. There had sprung up in that country a strange jargon of what is called a protestant ascendancy, as if such a thing as a religious ascendancy ought to take place in politics. Ministers, some time ago, got over the difficulty in part, and, although not in a way calculated to gain much respect, conciliated the affections of the catholics for the time. This, however, was not the only subject of complaint. There were other abuses in Ireland, of which the people did bitterly complain ; and when the coalition took place, in July last, however much I might lament that event, I certainly did think it might produce this good effect—that the corrupt administration of Ireland would be radically reformed, and that possibly as much might be gained to liberty there as seemed to be lost to it here. That was in fact near being the case, when all of a sudden things unfortunately took a different turn.

Without entering into the question — Who is to blame? I ask the King's ministers, and defy them to give me any answer but one, whether Ireland is not at present in a state of irritation? whether she is not in a state of danger? And if she is in such a situation as to give just cause of alarm to every friend of the country, whether this state has not been occasioned solely by his Majesty's ministers? Some people may say, "It is owing to the ministers here:"—others — "to the ministers there." But I defy any man to say that the present state of that country—whether it be owing to the Duke of Portland I know not — whether it be owing to the Right Hon. Gentle-
man

man opposite to me, or to Earl Fitzwilliam, I know not—But of this I am certain, that it is entirely owing to the improper conduct of the King's ministers. Let ministers themselves explain, and point out to the public those individuals on whom they say blame ought to attach;—but let them deny this fact if they can: that the present irritated state of Ireland has arisen solely from the conduct of ministers there or in this country; although I have little doubt in my own mind to which of them it is owing. Earl Fitzwilliam is sent over as Lord Lieutenant to Ireland, justly popular from his personal character, and more so from his connection with a part of the ministry here, supposed to be favourable to the claims of Ireland. He arrives; he consults with men to whom the people of Ireland had been long accustomed to look up with confidence;—he is adored, he is idolized—he is idolized to such a degree, that the people of Ireland join with him in the absurd cry of War! Nothing but Earl Fitzwilliam's popularity,—nothing but his personal character, and his connection with that part of the Ministry here, who were supposed to be friendly to the claims of the people of Ireland, could have induced them to join in that cry. What happens?—Earl Fitzwilliam states from the throne the general wishes of his Majesty for carrying on the war; that it is intended to give emancipation to the Roman Catholics of Ireland.—And although it is not usual for his Majesty's speech to state specifically the topics to which it recommends the attention of parliament; yet this the Lord Lieutenant states in very distinct terms. (It was intimated from the ministerial side of the House that this was not so). It was so understood (continued Mr. Fox), or, if you please, it was so misunderstood in the Irish parliament. They are told that abuses are to be reformed;—they see the most respected men in the country daily rising up in the House of Commons to propose the reform of abuses;—they see those measures attended with fewer dismissals from office undoubtedly than the people could have wished, but with the dismissal of several persons known to be connected with the old abuses. They consider all this as the omen of approaching liberty; and that all the people of Ireland, without distinction, are about to enjoy those rights and privileges to which they are in justice intitled, and which they ought always to have enjoyed.—All this passes, day after day, in the face of the world, without the least opposition on the part of the cabinet of Great Britain.—What follows?—Great supplies are called for by his Majesty; and the Irish parliament vote supplies exceeding, in an enormous degree, any ever voted in any former period. The Irish, in high expectation of the promised reform of abuses, with a degree of imprudence, not perhaps strictly justifiable on the sober and cautious principle
that

that reform and supply should go hand in hand (but it is the character of the nation to be more generous than prudent), granted the supplies before the promise was fulfilled. The moment these enormous supplies are granted, the cup is dashed from their lips, their eager and excited hopes are blasted, and they are told, "We have got your money;—you may now seek for your reform where you can." The ministers here then quarrel with this popular Lord Lieutenant, this favourite friend of their own, whose personal character did more for the coalition than the characters of all the other ministers united.—I say, that the personal character alone of Lord Fitzwilliam did more for the coalition than the characters of the whole cabinet of Great Britain united could do;—it made the coalition popular, because, from his accession it was supposed to be pure. They give up, however, this popular friend, whom but a few months before they had taken more pains to gain than all the rest who joined them either then or afterwards.—Even Earl Fitzwilliam they gave up rather than that Ireland should receive from this country the benefits to which she is in common justice intitled;—and in the hopes of which she had voted for the service of his Majesty such large and liberal supplies.

Sir, I may be told "that this Lord Lieutenant gave hopes and promises which he was not authorised to give." To that I answer, that from my knowledge of him, I do not believe it. But suppose it were so; what is that to us? what is that to this House? Is it not a matter of total indifference to us where the blame lies? Is not Ireland in danger? No man will deny it; and that is sufficient for my purpose. The blame attaches either on the ministers in Ireland, or on the ministers here;—and if this House does not institute an inquiry, and explain clearly and satisfactorily to the public who has been the cause of this alarming danger, we may be responsible for the dismemberment of the British empire. It may be supposed that this is one of those questions on which I have strong personal partialities. I admit it. I believe I shall never be able to divest myself of them; and I am perfectly convinced that Earl Fitzwilliam's conduct in this particular instance has been agreeable to the uniform tenour of his whole life. I firmly believe that he has acted fairly and honourably, and agreeably to what was understood between him and his colleagues in the British cabinet:—this conviction is matter of great private satisfaction to me—but it is nothing to the public, or to this House. That great and imminent danger has been incurred is undeniable; and this House cannot refuse to inquire into the cause of the danger, with a view to discover the means of averting it, without betraying one of its most important trusts. I call not for this inquiry to clear the character of this or that minister, in order to attach blame to another.

another. The great duty of this House is to shew to the people of England, by whose fault this danger has been created.

The Roman catholics of Ireland make about three fourths of the people, and I am happy to see that the Roman catholics and protestants now only make one party;—I do not therefore dread any rupture between the Roman catholics and the protestants. The parties now to be dreaded in Ireland are, on the one hand, a few people holding places of great emolument, and supporting corruption and abuses;—and on the other, the Irish nation. The protestants are as much interested in this great business of reform as the Roman catholics. They have but one great common interest—to preserve that country against a corrupt and oppressive administration. I no longer dread any danger to Ireland from disputes between the Roman catholics and the protestants.—But I dread that the Irish nation, in consequence of the support of abuses and corruption, may become less connected with, and less attached to, the English nation.—I dread the alienation of the Irish people from the English government. Many gentlemen in this country, who have not taken all the pains they might to examine into the subject, may imagine that the government of Ireland, because consisting of King, Lords and Commons, nearly resembles that of Great Britain. That however is by no means the case. These three branches of the Irish constitution, although the same in name with the three branches of the British constitution, differ materially in their composition;—and the government of Ireland varies in many other respects from the government of this country. I dare say also, that some gentlemen know so little of what has passed in Ireland since the year 1793, as to imagine that the Roman catholics are now nearly on the same footing with the protestants; and that, since the above period, they have suffered no persecutions or exclusions. If there is any man who thinks so, he grossly deceives himself. But passing over these circumstances, is it not self-evident, that the danger arising from the present state of Ireland, has been created by some of the King's ministers? Let the House go into an inquiry, and they will clearly see on whom punishment ought to fall. If the ministers in Ireland are guilty, let them be punished: or, if his Majesty's ministers here (which is much more probable) have been the cause of this irritation, let punishment fall upon them. If Earl Fitzwilliam, rashly and wantonly running after popularity, has sacrificed the real interests of that country, he deserves the severest censure, and the most rigorous proceedings of this House against him. But I am confident that this is not the fact. If upon an inquiry, by this House, it shall appear, that he has been trifled with, and shuffled out of his measures and situation by ministers here, in order to serve their own base purposes; if it shall appear that he has acted on the principles of

prudence

prudence and patriotism, and that his government was founded on principles which tended to preserve the connection between the two countries, what censure, what punishment, can be too severe for those who have been the authors of such shuffling and of such duplicity? That the whole blame in this business is to be imputed to his Majesty's ministers, is a matter about which no man living can dispute. It may be said, perhaps, that some of the King's ministers are more and others less blamable. If that is so, let us go into a committee, and we shall be able to ascertain with accuracy the different degrees of guilt that belong to different individuals. On that ground it is impossible to refuse an inquiry.

I have now nearly gone through the different points to which at the outset I called the attention of the House, though I have purposely omitted many circumstances connected with the subject. I know it to be a common argument against such motions as this to say, "Your final object is the removal of ministers; why then do you not move at once to remove the King's ministers?" My answer is, Because I think we ought first to have an inquiry. At the same time I candidly admit my opinion to be, that if an inquiry be gone into, the result must be the removal of his Majesty's present ministers. On what rational ground should this induce any member of the House of Commons to oppose inquiry? Does any man, who approves of continuing the war, hope for better success than we have hitherto experienced, while it is conducted with the same weakness and folly? Does any man who wishes for an end to the war, hope that his Majesty's present ministers can obtain for this country a safe and honourable peace? If, after an inquiry into their past conduct, it shall turn out that they have acted justly and wisely, then let us continue our confidence in them. But if the contrary should appear, as I strongly suspect it will, then it will become the duty of this House to call them to an account, perhaps to punishment. This inquiry, among other advantages attending it, will discover to the nation the true causes of all our late failures and calamities.

In every undertaking, there are two points to be considered—the object, and the means. Wise men choose a wise object, and persist in their efforts to obtain it by varying the means, the object still the same. The conduct of the present administration has been quite the reverse with regard to the war. Day after day, and motion after motion has varied the object, but they uniformly insist on the same means. Blood, war, and treasure are their means, however they may vary their object. They have invariably persisted in these means, and in the means (if I may so express myself) of putting these means in execution, they have equally persisted. They have constantly avoided

making a choice between the two branches of the alternative I have stated. They have roused all France against them. They have gained no party whatever in that country, because they have clearly shewn that they deserved the confidence of no party.

The present state of the affairs of Ireland shews, that there is no part of the British empire in which the strongest traces of the Minister's misconduct are not to be found. There are some occasions, one would imagine, upon which Ministers must wish to be clearly understood. But men never get the better of their nature; and whenever the Right Hon. Gentleman opposite to me expresses himself, he is differently understood by every man who hears him: even upon those occasions when he pretends to be most explicit, he is differently understood by different members of this House, by his own particular friends in it; and when he is called upon to explain himself, he is equally unfortunate — his expressions are still ambiguous and doubtful. What has lately happened in Ireland is a farther proof of this; for it now turns out, that upon the most important subjects he is not understood, or rather he is misunderstood by his own colleagues in the cabinet. Has not the Right Hon. Gentleman the faculty of speech? It is not surely for want of words, or choice of expression, that the Right Hon. Gentleman is thus unintelligible. But, although possessed of as great powers of eloquence as ever belonged to man, he employs that gift, not for the purpose for which it was conferred, of being clearly and distinctly understood, but for the purpose of being *misunderstood*. When in a private room with some of his new colleagues, it is impossible for the Right Hon. Gentleman so to express himself as that they can be certain they understand him. What was said of a great man of ancient times, is extremely applicable to the Right Hon. Gentleman — *In rebus politicis, nihil simplex, nihil apertum, nihil honestum*. If we go into this inquiry, we shall prove to our constituents that we are really affected by the state of the country, and that we are not idle or forgetful of our duty. It is of much importance, in this moment of danger, that we should be perfectly acquainted with our true situation. Let us put it out of the power of any man to say that Great Britain is persisting in a disastrous war, without knowing who are her allies; — without inquiring what are the causes of her failures and calamities; and that every thing is gone except the name of her ancient constitution.

But whether a committee of inquiry is granted or not, I shall at least derive this satisfaction from having moved for it, that I shall shew to the people of England that there are still some men in the great council of the nation, who anxiously wish to have an opportunity of proving to them what is their real situation,

situation, and of doing every thing in their power to avert, if possible, the farther calamities of war, and effusion of human blood.

If a committee of inquiry is gone into, I shall have occasion to move for a number of papers, to which I have alluded in the course of my speech, particularly the correspondence respecting Ireland, and which will afford that information which I conceive to be of so much importance. At present I shall conclude with moving, "That this House do resolve itself into a committee of the whole House, to consider of the state of the nation."

Correct LIST of the Minority who voted in favour of Mr. Fox's Motion on the 24th March, 1795, for a Committee to inquire into the State of the Nation.

Antonie, Lee,
 Anson, Thos.
 Aubrey, Sir John,
 Baring, Sir Fras.
 Baring, John,
 Barclay, George,
 Barham, J. F.
 Bouverie, Hon. Ed.
 Bouverie, Hon. Wm.
 Burch, J. R.
 Byng, Geo.
 Clayton, Sir Robt.
 Church, J. B.
 Coke, Thos.
 Colhoun, Wm.
 Courtenay, John,
 Crewe, John,
 Crespiigny, T. C.
 Fitzpatrick, Gen.
 Fletcher, Sir Henry,
 Fox, Rt. Hon. C. J.
 Gascoigne, Sir Thos.,
 Grey, Chas.
 Halhed, N. B.
 Hare, James,
 Howard, Henry,
 Hufley, Wm.
 Jervoise, C. J.
 Kempe, Thos.
 Knight, R. P.
 Langston, John,
 Lemon, Sir Wm.
 Long, Samuel,
 Ludlow, Earl,
 Martin, Jas.
 M'Leod, Gen.
 Maitland, Col.
 Milnes, R. S.
 Milner, Sir Wm.
 North, Dudley,
 Peirse, Henry,
 Phillips, J. G.
 Plumer, Wm.
 Powlett, W. Powlett,

Great Marlow
 Lichfield
 Clitheroe
 Wycombe
 Exeter
 Bridport
 Stockbridge
 Northampton
 Old Sarum
 Thetford
 Middlesex
 Bleckingly
 Wendover
 Norfolk County
 Bedford
 Tamworth
 Cheshire County
 Sudbury
 Tavistock
 Cumberland County
 Westminster
 Arundel
 Northumberland County
 Lymington
 Knareborough
 Gloucester
 New Sarum
 Yarmouth, Isle of Wight
 Lewes
 Ludlow
 Bridgewater
 Cornwall County
 Ilchester
 Huntingdon County
 Tewkesbury
 Inverness County
 Jedburgh, &c.
 York
 ditto
 Great Grimsby
 Northallerton
 Caermarthen
 Hertford County
 Totness

Ridley, Sir M. W.
 Robinson, M.
 Russel, Ld. Wm.
 St. John, Hon. St. And.
 Sheridan, R. B.
 Shuckburgh, Sir Geo.
 Smith, Wm.
 Smith, Gen.
 Spencer, Ld. Robt.
 Sturt, Chas.
 Taylor, M. A.
 Tarleton, Gen.
 Thorold, Sir John,
 Townshend, Ld. John,
 Vyner, Robt.
 Vyner, Rt. Jun.
 Walwyn, Jas.
 Western, C. C.
 Whitbread, Sam. Jun.
 Wilbraham, R.
 Wynne, R. W.

Newcastle
Boroughbridge
Surry County
Bedford County
Stafford
Warwick County
Camelford
Wareham
ditto
Bridport
Poole
Liverpool
Lincoln County
Knareborough
Thirsk
Lincoln County
Hereford
Malden
Bedford
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Tellers { Chas. Grey
 { R. B. Sheridan.

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